

## The Buddha and His Teachings The Main Doctrines in Buddhism

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The Buddha, who was a great spiritual teacher in the world, was born as a human being in India, present Nepal in B.C. 623. His personal name was Siddhattha and his family name was Gotama. The king Suddhodhana and queen Mahamaya were his parents. According to Buddhist canon, he had practiced his spirituality a lot in his previous lives as a Bodhisatta. As the results of his spiritual development, he was born with a great wisdom and merit. He received a good education as a prince as well as a child. Following the Indian custom, he was married quite young, at the age of sixteen, to a beautiful and devoted young princess Yasodhara. Living in luxury palaces, young couple spent a very happy life. Meanwhile prince Siddhattha wanted to realize the life and find a solution for suffering of mankind. At the age of 29, when his only son, Rahula was born, doing his great renunciation, he left his kingdom and became an ascetic searching for a solution to end suffering.

The young ascetic Gotama wandered for six years around the valley of the Ganges, meeting famous religious teachers, studying and following their traditional systems and methods, and submitting himself to rigorous ascetic practices. Siddhattha was not satisfied with those teachings and he gave up all traditional religions and methods. Finally he decided to practice his own way. One evening, he was seated under the Bodhi tree on the bank of the Neranjara River. Practicing the Noble Eight Fold Path, analyzing suffering and cause of suffering, he attained enlightenment at the age of 35. After his enlightenment, he was known as the Gotama Buddha, the supreme one, the enlightened one.

After his great discovery about the world, and how to get rid of suffering, the Lord Buddha explained his discovery to the world compassionately about 45 years. At the age of 80, he passed away. His noble disciples protected his teachings and they brought it from generation to generation.

The Buddha said very clearly, his teaching is not a creation, it is a discovery. Whether a Buddha appears or not in the world, his teaching is forever. We respect him because he discovered this world reality by himself without any help of others and explained it to the world. He himself explained his teachings' summary in a stanza. It is,

*'Sabba pàpassa akaranam kusalassa upasampadà,*

*Sacitta pariyodapanam etam buddànasànam'. (Dhammapada)*

Not to do any evil, do good and purify once mind is the message of all Buddhas.

All Buddhas who arise in the world during certain periods of time discover this very same message and kindly preach it to the world. In summary the Buddha pointed out to the world the path

of happiness that is getting rid of suffering. Here we can see three steps. According to this message the Buddha's effort was avoiding going to hell, encouraging going to heaven (සත්‍යමග්ග) and showing the path to liberation (මොක්ඛමග්ග).

Everybody likes to live with happiness and without difficulties in this life. Therefore, everyone tries to practice the path of happiness. The quality of happiness differs from stage to stage. In this situation, Buddhism points out the gradual path in happiness from the lower stage to the highest stage.

Many people in the world gratify their senses in the name of happiness. Buddhism doesn't reject sensual pleasure, but points out that this experience is less pleasurable and more dangerous. Hence, Buddhism explains the best path to enjoyment in a gradual path.

Some people think that Buddhism is only for hereafter (or next birth) not for this life. However, the reality is that we can practice Buddha's teachings and can gain the results in this life as well as hereafter. A lot of teachings in Buddhism relate to the success in this birth. Thus, the Buddha very first points out how to succeed this life. Buddhism says to practice four things which are education, personal wealth (or employment), health and morality (or virtue). Succeeding in this first step is similar to obtaining a bachelors' degree. However, the Buddha doesn't stop in this first level, he further explains how to achieve more happiness. Even though we are well educated, rich and physically healthy, if we are unhealthy mentally, all other things that we achieve are useless. That is why, Buddhism further points out the better way of happiness.

Inner happiness depends on not only education and wealth, but the purification of mind. If mind is polluted with negative thoughts like greed, anger and delusion, there is no inner peace. When mind is polluted, actions, words and thoughts are also incorrect and unwholesome. That polluted mind causes suffering in this life and hereafter. That is why the Buddha said not to do any evil. Not doing evil is not enough for happiness, but also, we have to cultivate good for the real happiness with a meritorious mind. Buddhism emphasizes the three meritorious deeds which are generosity (*dana*), virtue (*seela*) and meditation (*bhavana*) for happiness. Those merits cause us to succeed in this life and hereafter. If a person has done a lot of meritorious deeds in this life, it means his mind is rich in merits. A meritorious mind can gain happiness. When we do good deeds, it means our mind is pure, calm and quiet. A pure mind can bring happiness to our life. As the result of practicing good deeds we can be happy when we think about our life. This level is explained in Buddhism as the path of heaven (*Saggamagga*). Here it is very important to understand the Karmic law throughout listening of the Buddha's teachings from the good association. The success of this level is like having a master's degree. In this level, we can reduce greed and anger, but furthermore we have to fight with ignorance which is main reason of suffering. That is why we should find the next level, the heart of Buddhism.

Further we have to understand the cause of suffering and getting rid of suffering in this life itself. That is why the Buddha explained how to purify once mind. Virtue, concentration or tranquility and wisdom with understanding of dependent origination cause us to get rid of all sufferings and develop real happiness. Virtue means a very high level of discipline in behavior and

speech with right vision. With a good discipline, if a person focuses his mind on a particular meritorious object such as loving kindness and breathing meditation, he can concentrate his mind with pure thoughts. With that concentration, if one has to reflect on the world reality according to impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and selflessness (*anatta*) in the correct way he is able to overcome suffering. As the result, one can live without desire and hatred because there is no delusion. When he investigates, he sees that present moment is only present moment as nothing comes to the present from the past and nothing goes to the future from the present. However, Buddhism describes past moment influences the present moment, and present moment influences the future moment, but any permanent thing doesn't continue. According to this teaching, the most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence which is the nature of our life that consists of body and mind. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (අනුක්ඛං සම්භුතං නුක්ඛං න භවිස්සති). Whatever we experience through our six senses like eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind five aggregate arise at the moment, and they cease immediately at the moment without remaining anything. This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates. He sees the arising and ceasing of all his experiences at the moment very well. Then he can live as a person seeing the truth of world reality in a new fresh way.

Understanding of the dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppada*) depends on understanding of the five aggregates. If we have some sort of experience through our senses, it means five aggregates arise together and they cease together at the same moment. It is instant. As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. This is the highest intelligence in Buddhism. If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. When we experience through our senses about the world, these five aggregates arise together. They can't be separated. As the result of arising these five things, we have an experience. These five aggregates suddenly arise and also cease instantly. When we experience something, they have not only arisen but ceased also. When we experience something through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue or body, these five senses can't get pleasure or pain. As soon as those experiences occur they are instantly, we get pleasure or pain in the sense of mind as a past experience. However, we think that we are experiencing in the present because of ignorance. That is why we suffer. If we can understand that these five aggregates arise and cease at the moment with the conditions, we are able to understand its impermanence. Then we know we have nothing to desire or hate. It means we have overcome suffering. As much as we have this understanding and are reflecting on it in every moment, we have liberated from unsatisfactoriness.

This is the ultimate truth that Buddhism teaches us to be able to get rid of all sufferings. However, our delusion doesn't accept this reality. If someone can realize this reality by himself with the guidance of Buddha's message, he can overcome suffering.

## Very Important Doctrines in Buddhism

(To practice in our day to day life in the name of happiness)

**The Triple Gem :-** (The Most valuable things that we received as the result of previous merits)  
The Buddha (Buddha's Enlightenment)

The Dhamma (Buddha's Teachings)

The Sangha (Buddha's Noble Disciples)

**The Five Precepts :-**

1. Abstaining from taking lives (*Pàṇātipāta veramani*)
2. Abstaining from stealing (*Adinnādānā veramani*)
3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct (*Kāmesumiccācārā veramani*)
4. Abstaining from false speech (*Musāvādā veramani*)
5. Abstaining from taking intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness  
(*Surāmeraya maddapamādatṭānā veramani*)

**The Three Levels of practicing Buddha's message :-**

**First Level:-**

1. Education (*Sippam/ suta*), 2. Economy (*Dhanam*), 3. Health (*ārogya*), 4. Morality (*Samacariyā*)

**Second level** (Three Meritorious Deeds):-

1. Generosity (*Dāna*)      2. Virtue or Morality (*Seela*)      3. Meditation (*Bhāvanā*)
- (The Three Friends those who put the treasure inside)

**Third Level** (Three Disciplines)

1. Virtue (*Seela*)      2. Concentration (*Samādhi*)      3. Wisdom (*Pannā*)

**The Ultimate Goal of life:-** Happiness (Keeping mind away from all defilements)

**The Best Friend** - Mindfulness (*Sati*)

**The Fourfold Mindfulness -**

1. The contemplation on matter or body (*Kayanupassana*)
2. The contemplation on feelings (*Vedanānupassana*)
3. The contemplation on mind or consciousness (*Cittānupassana*)
4. The contemplation on mental formations (*Dhammanupassana*)

**Five Spiritual Faculties -** 1. Confidence (*Saddhā*)      2. Energy (*Viriya*)      3. Mindfulness (*Sati*)  
(Our real Heritage, Dowry)      4. Concentration (*Samādhi*)      5. Wisdom (*Pannā*)

### The Highest knowledge that a person can gain for getting rid of suffering –

1. The Knowledge of Law (*Kammassakata Sammaditti*)
2. The Knowledge of the Dependent Origination (*Ariyasammaditti*)

### Enemies that we should get rid of – Greed (*Lobha*), Hatred (*Dhosa*), Delusion (*Moha*)

(Defilements/ Unwholesomeness) (The enemies those who steal our good internal human values)

### Dhamma Reflexion - Loving Kindness/Friendliness (*Metta*), Honesty (*Uju*), Wisdom (*Panna*)

### The Four Noble Truths –

1. The suffering (*Dukkha sacca*)
2. The cause of suffering (*Samudaya sacca*)
3. The cessation of suffering (*Nirodha sacca*)
4. The path that leads to cessation of suffering (*Magga sacca*)

### The Noble Eight Fold Paths –

- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Right Understanding | ( <i>Sammà Ditthi</i> )    |
| Right Thoughts      | ( <i>Sammà samkappa</i> )  |
| Right Speech        | ( <i>Sammà Vācà</i> )      |
| Right Action        | ( <i>Sammà kammantha</i> ) |
| Right Livelihood    | ( <i>Sammà ājiva</i> )     |
| Right Effort        | ( <i>Sammà Vāyàma</i> )    |
| Right Mindfulness   | ( <i>Sammà sathi</i> )     |
| Right Concentration | ( <i>Sammà samādhi</i> )   |

### The Spirit/ Core /Base / Heart or Essence of Buddhism

- Dependent Origination/ Cause and effect (*Paticcasamuppada*)

(The Foundation to understand impermanence)

### Five Aggregates:-

- |  |                                     |                                |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Matter ( <i>Rupa</i> )                | 2. Feelings ( <i>Vedanà</i> )       | 3. Perception ( <i>Sannà</i> ) |
| 4. Mental Formations ( <i>Sankhàra</i> ) | 5. Consciousness ( <i>Vinnàna</i> ) |                                |

### Main Meditation Techniques in Buddhism:

Concentration (*Samatha*) & Vipassana (Insight) meditation

### How to investigate these five aggregates? As;

- |                                |   |                                    |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Arising ( <i>Samudaya</i> ) | 2. Ceasing ( <i>Atthamgama</i> )                | 3. Gratification ( <i>Assàda</i> ) |
| 4. Dangers ( <i>ādinava</i> )  | 5. Letting go = Liberation ( <i>Nissarana</i> ) |                                    |

### Causes to develop the wisdom – (*Pannavuddhi Karanani*)

1. Association with a good friend who explains the Buddha's real message (*Sappurisa sansevo*)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message (*Saddhamma savanam*)
3. Wise Reflection (*Yoniso manasikàro*)
4. Practice (*Dhammànudhamma patipatti*)

### The Buddha's Message in a nutshell

*'Sabba pàpassa akaranam kusalassa upasampadà,  
Sacitta pariyo dapanam etam buddànasànam'.*

– Get rid of all evil, do what is good, purify one's mind

All above doctrines can be ordered in a particle method. They are;

1. Associating noble friends who explain the Buddha's message (*Sappurisa samseva*)
2. Listening to Buddha's message, the Dhamma (*Saddhammasavana*)
3. Confidence in Buddha's enlightenment (*Saddha*)
4. Wise investigation (*Yonisa manasikara*)
5. Mindfulness and clear comprehension. (*Sati sampajanna*)
6. Discipline in senses (*Indriya samvara*)
7. Three Disciplines in mental, verbal and behavioral (*Thrividha sucarita*)
8. The Fourfold Mindfulness (*Satipatthana*)
9. Seven Enlightenment factors (*Satta bojjhanga*)
10. Gaining the full knowledge and liberation from all kinds of sufferings. (*Vijjavimutta*)



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)

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